

Snyder, who also is a disabled Vietnam veteran. The two men worked together at the department for close to 25 years. "I've never seen a person give so much heart and caring to his job as John did," Snyder said. "We had guys coming in who were basically homeless. He would take them home until they got on their feet. I've seen him cry at his desk over some of these situations, over the misuse and abuse the military has given some of these people."

Berg often referred clients to the Winnebago County Veterans Assistance office in Memorial Hall. Herbert L. Crenshaw, also a Vietnam veteran, works there. He and Berg worked together to get help for thousands of vets over the years, he said. "He worked with this office to get veterans back on their feet, to get jobs, get assistance," Crenshaw said. "He had walked in their shoes. He had the same difficulties and disabilities they had."

Berg, like many of his clients, had a full disability designation from the Department of Veterans Affairs. "He could have sat home and drawn a disability," Crenshaw said. "He chose to work." Berg had a network that he could use to get practical assistance for veterans and offer them moral support. He helped found VietNow, a support group for Vietnam veterans that started in Rockford and then became a national organization. It still thrives.

Nick Parnello, one of the original VietNow members and now president of the Vietnam Veterans Honor Society, said John was "the only guy that always showed up" at the early meetings. "Some of the guys felt that we should give up because there were so few of us back then," Parnello said. "But if John could show up in his disabled condition, it was an inspiration to all of us. Everybody he came in contact with was changed because of his commitment to them."

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

In November 1991, Berg met Lynn Walquist of Rockford. Her daughter and son-in-law, who knew Berg through mutual acquaintances in the veterans circle, fixed them up. "I've got four kids—two in college—and all these animals," recalled Lynn, who's always had a cat and at least one dog. "What's wrong with him?"

The kids always had rock music blaring when Berg came to pick her up for a date. "He said, 'Do you ever listen to classical music?'" she said, she didn't. He taught her to love it as he did. Lynn's scrapbook holds tickets from concerts they attended at the Lyric Opera in Chicago and elsewhere. By then, Berg could make music on the piano and other instruments with one hand. He sang with the Rock Valley Chorale and with a Mendelssohn Club group. They fell in love and were married April 25, 1992. "It was the best day of our lives," Lynn Berg said. "He told me: 'I'll never say no to you,' and he kept his promise."

Over the years they attended VietNow conventions and events. She became active as an "associate," which is what veterans' spouses are called in the group. "He always said that he felt very fortunate. He was only in Vietnam for three months," Lynn Berg said. "The others who had been there longer were the ones who came back with so many problems." His friends became her friends. Her children and grandchildren were his.

He's smiling in every picture his wife has in her numerous photo albums. But it would be a mistake to say Berg's transformation from an angry young man to a person with purpose and a zest for living was easy, said his sister, Hilary Belcher. "He had to grow into a new personality and lifestyle and everything," Belcher said. "He was gung-ho when he went into the service, and then he lost it and he got angry. But he got through it, and his gung ho came back."

Retired U.S. Army Col. Fremont Piercefield knew Berg well from their mutual work in various organizations, including the VFW, Disabled American Veterans and the Winnebago County Veterans Association. "He was the gentlest, kindest man," the colonel said. "He was there when you expected him and when you needed him." He was the same way on the home front, his wife said. He took care of the house and the cars and the lawn, but he also taught her how to do those things. She needs to know them now that he's gone.

He would see a need and answer it before other people noticed, she said. For instance, he was concerned that one of her daughters was in danger walking from the library back to her dorm at Northern Illinois University after using a computer late at night. He bought her a computer for her room.

There were health issues over the years. Berg took medication to deal with headaches and seizures that came with the head injury. He learned to compensate for the partial paralysis of his left side and minimized the limp. He never regained use of his left hand. It looked just as it did when he was 20 years old, his wife and sister said, as if it had been frozen in time the day he was injured.

THE END OF SOMETHING

In May of 2002, Berg began having excruciating, debilitating headaches and more frequent seizures, his wife said. Brain scans showed bright spots of shrapnel but the brain tumor was not detected for a couple of months. He had surgery, but the tumor was malignant, and doctors indicated it was just a matter of time. Lynn Berg remembers one doctor predicting John had about nine months. He exceeded that by about seven months. VietNow treasurer and good friend Darrell Gilgan visited Berg as he was recuperating from the surgery in a Beloit nursing home.

Berg's radio was missing one day and Gilgan asked him about it. "He gave it to the guy in the next bed, a B-17 pilot during World War II," Gilgan said. "He was like that." Berg continued to work as much as he could, but the tumor was growing again and the pain was awful, his wife said. During his last months, she cared for him at their home, with help from the Northern Illinois Hospice Association. He died Oct. 10, 2003. A few months later, Gilgan began the paperwork necessary to have Berg considered for addition to the Vietnam Memorial. The key element in Berg's favor was that the Department of Veterans Affairs had determined that his death was a result of the combat injury in 1968.

Gilgan sent a letter to U.S. Rep. Don Manzullo, R-Egan, who sent it through the proper military channels. "I had known John for years," said Manzullo, who will sit with Berg's family at a Memorial Day ceremony Monday at The Wall. "Here is a guy who could have given up, but he refused to accept the fact that people told him he was 100 percent disabled. He went to work to serve as a witness and an example to people who are severely disabled."

Some friends and family have traveled from the Rockford area to join Lynn Berg at the ceremony, which will include a special remembrance for her husband and three other veterans whose names have been added on The Wall. John Berg's parents are not well enough to go. His dad wishes he could, though. "It's an end to something, I guess," Harold Berg said. "He just got an extension on his death." That sad morning when the telegram came so many years ago and the day his son died all those years later occupy the same place of grief in his heart. "We hoped the day would never come," his dad said, "but then we found out he wasn't going to make it, after all."

HUMAN RIGHTS IN VIETNAM

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 20, 2005

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, today in the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and Africa, I chaired a timely and critical hearing that examined the government of Vietnam's respect for human rights and religious freedom.

Our witnesses included Ms. Nina Shea, Vice Chair, U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom; Ms. Minky Worden, Media Director, Human Rights Watch; Ms. Helen Ngo, Chairwoman Committee for Religious Freedom in Vietnam; Dr. Nguyen Than, Executive Director, Boat People S.O.S.; Mr. Vo Van Ai, President, Vietnam Committee on Human Rights; Mr. Y Khim Nie, Executive Director, Montagnard Human Rights Organization. The excellent testimony these witnesses provided can be found online (http://wwwc.house.gov/international_relations/)

Before I report on the human rights crisis in Vietnam, let me say at the outset, Mr. Speaker, that I remain deeply concerned about obtaining a full, thorough and responsible accounting of the remaining American MIAs from the Vietnam conflict. As my colleagues know well, of the 2,583 POW/MIAs who were unaccounted for—Vietnam, 1,921; Laos, 569; Cambodia, 83; and China, 10—just under 1,400 remain unaccounted for in Vietnam. While the joint POW/MIA accounting command normally conducts four joint field activities per year in Vietnam, I remain deeply concerned that the government of Vietnam could be more forthcoming and transparent in providing the fullest accounting. It is our sacred duty to the families of the missing that we never forget and never cease our pursuit until we achieve the fullest possible accounting of our MIAs.

Today's hearing on human rights abuses in Vietnam must be reviewed in the context of the official visit this week to Washington by Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai. Designed to mark 10 years of diplomatic relations between the United States and Vietnam, the visit is the highest-level since the end of the Vietnam War. Khai will meet with President Bush and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, conclude intelligence agreements on terrorism and transnational crime, as well as begin IMET military cooperation, meet with Microsoft chairman Bill Gates, and ring the bell on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange.

Vietnam hopes to gain U.S. support to join the World Trade Organization this year. Trade with the United States has exploded in the past decade, from \$1.5 billion to \$6.4 billion in 2004. Vietnamese exports to the United States have also jumped from \$800 million in 2001 to \$5 billion last year.

An outside observer looking at all of this activity would in all likelihood conclude that Vietnam is a close business and political partner of the United States in Asia. And that observer, if asked, would also likely deduce that in order to cooperate so closely, Vietnam must also share the core values of the United States that make our country great. Values such as the promotion of democracy, respect for human rights, and the protection of religious freedom, free speech, and the rights of minorities.

A quick look at the State Department's annual Human Rights report on Vietnam, however, reveals the opposite. According to the 2004 report released just three months ago:

"Vietnam is a one-party state, ruled and controlled by the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV). . . . The Government's human rights record remained poor, and it continued to commit serious abuses. The Government continued to deny citizens the right to change their government. Several sources reported that security forces shot, detained, beat, and were responsible for the disappearances of persons during the year. Police also reportedly sometimes beat suspects during arrests, detention, and interrogation. . . . The Government continued to hold political and religious prisoners. . . . The Government significantly restricted freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and freedom of association. . . . Security forces continued to enforce restrictions on public gatherings and travel in some parts of the country, particularly in the Central Highlands and the Northwest Highlands. The Government prohibited independent political, labor, and social organizations. . . . The Government restricted freedom of religion and prohibited the operation of unregistered religious organizations. Participants in unregistered organizations faced harassment as well as possible detention and imprisonment. The Government imposed limits on freedom of movement of some individuals whom it deemed a threat. The Government did not permit human rights organizations to form or operate.

Moreover, in September 2004, the State Department designated Vietnam as a "Country of Particular Concern" or "CPC" for its systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom.

Congress has also expressed its grave concern about the state of human rights in Vietnam. The House of Representatives has twice passed legislation authored by me on human rights in Vietnam. H.R. 1587, The Vietnam Human Rights Act of 2004, passed the House by a 323–45 vote in July of 2004. A similar measure passed by a 410–1 landslide in the House in 2001. The measures called for limiting further increases of non-humanitarian U.S. aid from being provided to Vietnam if certain human rights provisions were not met, and authorized funding to overcome the jamming of Radio Free Asia and funding to support non-governmental organizations which promote human rights and democratic change in Vietnam. Regrettably, both bills stalled in Senate committees and have not been enacted into law.

I regret that no one from the State Department was available to participate in today's hearing to explain the incongruity of United States support for the government of Vietnam, as expressed in our close and growing-ever-closer trade and military relations, and U.S. concern for the appalling lack of respect for the basic human rights of its citizens that the Vietnamese government has consistently demonstrated.

The Human Rights Reports, the Report on International Religious Freedom, the Trafficking in Persons Report, the reports of leading international human rights organizations, and countless witnesses, some of whose testimonies were provided today, give evidence to the fact that the government of Vietnam has inflicted and continues to inflict terrible suffering on countless people.

It is a regime that arrests and imprisons writers, scientists, academics, religious leaders

and even veteran communists in their own homes, and lately in Internet cafes, for speaking out for freedom and against corruption. In fact, the comments I am making right now would easily fetch me a 15-year prison sentence replete with torture if I were a Vietnamese national or Member of Parliament making these comments in Vietnam.

It is a government that crushes thousands of Montagnard protestors, as they did in the Central Highlands during Easter weekend in 2004, killing and beating many peaceful protestors.

The government has forcibly closed over 400 Christian churches in the Central Highlands, and the government continues to force tens of thousands of Christians to renounce their faith. I would note here that it is inspiring but not unexpected that many of these Christians have steadfastly resisted those pressures and refused to renounce Christ. One pastor estimated that 90 percent have refused to renounce their Christian faith, despite government efforts to compel them to do so.

This is a government that has detained the leadership of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam and continues to attempt to control the leadership of the Catholic Church.

This is a government that imprisoned a Catholic priest by the name of Father Ly and meted out a 10-year prison sentence. Father Ly was imprisoned in 2001 when he was arrested after submitting testimony to a hearing of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. In his testimony, he criticized the communist government of Vietnam for its policies of repressing religious freedom. In fact, I was the author of H. Con. Res. 378, which called for the immediate release of Father Ly and cleared Congress 424–1 on May 12, 2004.

Thankfully Father Ly, along with Dr. Nguyen Dan Que, were released from prison earlier this year, in all likelihood due to the pressure from the United States with its CPC designation.

Their release was part of a process called for in the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act, which I cosponsored, which mandates that the U.S. government engage in dialogue with severe violators of religious freedom to improve conditions or face "Presidential actions," which could include sanctions or withdrawal of non-humanitarian assistance.

The Vietnamese government also took some other positive steps in response to the CPC designation, including a new law streamlining the application process for religious groups registering with the government and prime ministerial directives which prohibit forced renunciations of faith and allow Protestant "house churches" in ethnic minority provinces to operate if they renounce connections to certain expatriate groups, particularly the Montagnard Foundation, which is based in the United States.

And in May, the State Department announced it had reached an agreement on religious freedom with Vietnam. Under the agreement, the Vietnamese government committed to:

Fully implement the new legislation on religious freedom and to render previous contradictory regulations obsolete;

Instruct local authorities to strictly and completely adhere to the new legislation and ensure their compliance;

Facilitate the process by which religious congregations are able to open houses of worship; and

Give special consideration to prisoners and cases of concern raised by the United States during the granting of prisoner amnesties.

Time will tell whether the government will respect this agreement and comply with its provisions, or whether there will be a return to business as usual once the spotlight is removed. But the agreement does show that the provisions of the International Religious Freedom Act seem to be helping to improve the respect for religious freedom in some of the worst violator countries.

The more important point is that religious freedom is not a matter of compliance with an agreement, but an attitude of respect for citizens who choose to worship and peacefully practice their religious beliefs that extends from the highest government leaders down to local authorities and the village police.

In a recent interview given prior to his visit to the United States, Prime Minister Khai stated, "we have no prisoners of conscience in Vietnam," and declared that "political reforms and economic reforms should be closely harmonized."

His statement is typical of the attitude of the government of Vietnam, which has scoffed at the Vietnam Human Rights Act and dismissed charges of human rights abuses, pleading the tired mantra of interference in the internal affairs of their government and that our struggle is some way related to the war in Vietnam. They say, Vietnam is a country, not a war. That is their protest, and I would say that is precisely the issue.

The hearing we held today was about the shameful human rights record of a country, more accurately, of a government that abuses the rights of its own people. And, of course, Vietnam is a country with millions of wonderful people who yearn to breathe free and to enjoy the blessings of liberty. We say, behave like an honorable government, stop bringing dishonor and shame to your government by abusing your own people and start abiding by internationally recognized U.N. covenants that you have signed.

When is enough, enough? Vietnam needs to come out of the dark ages of repression, brutality and abuse and embrace freedom, the rule of law, and respect for fundamental human rights. Vietnam needs to act like the strategic partner of the United States we would like it to be, treating its citizens, even those who disagree with government policies, with respect and dignity.

Human rights are central, are at the core of our relationship with governments and the people they purport to represent. The United States of America will not turn a blind eye to the oppression of a people, any people in any region of the world.

INTRODUCTION OF THE WEATHER MODIFICATION RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2005

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 20, 2005

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Weather Modification